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Columnists

Brookman: Simple solutions for taking better care of Peace Bridge

George Brookman

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Damage is shown at the Peace Bridge near downtown Calgary on Sunday, July 24, 2022. Column writer George Brookman suggests night-time security is an easy solution to stopping vandalism and those costs could be offset by the money currently spent on repairs each year. Jim Wells/Postmedia

Nothing good ever happens after midnight.

Those words from my teenage years came back to me this week as I heard the news that some angry and distraught vandal took a hammer or whatever to the Peace Bridge. Full disclosure here, I think the Peace Bridge is an amazing and iconic structure that enhances our city as well as any other piece of public art that we have. Every day, hundreds of pedestrians, cyclists and others cross it or stop on it, take pictures, stand on it and enjoy the views of the Bow River valley.

I was a fan of the Peace Bridge from day one, but after holding six sunrise breakfasts on it to support the Calgary Military Resource Centre, I developed a real passion for the bridge and all that it is to our city.

Thus, I was very distressed to hear about this latest vandalism and once again, I found myself wondering why we do not enact some simple solutions that seem obvious and do not really require study or committee work.

Obviously, we should replace the broken glass and obviously if there are other materials that might be more sustainable, then we should use them.

However, if we have truly spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in repairs to the bridge and if we believe that there will always be individuals intent on destroying art pieces like this bridge, then why don't we find other solutions to the problem.

For example, for roughly $80,000 couldn't we provide real security on the bridge from sundown to sunrise? The city already spends $72,000 a year replacing, on average, six panels at a cost of $12,000 each. This money could cover the costs of having someone on the bridge guarding it at night.

There must be very little traffic on the bridge at night, if this individual was able to methodically walk along smashing panels for some period of time. So, alternately, why not design some architecturally appropriate gates and simply close the bridge from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.? The few people who use the bridge late at night could easily use the 10th Street Bridge instead. I raise this because it often feels like our Administration in City Hall, seldom seeks to find the simple or obvious solution to problems, and prefers to put the issues to some sort of study or committee.

While I am on the subject of simple solutions, I had the experience during the Stampede of driving up 1st Street S.W. and hitting a pothole large enough to practically swallow a Volkswagen. I know that because I was driving one at the time. Since then, I've been observing the condition of many of our residential roadways in the city. The potholes and rough roads are

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We seem to have the money to tear up perfectly good sidewalks in order to create corner bump-outs and bicycle lanes, but we do not have the wherewithal to simply fix the roads. Of course, the Climate Cult that we are developing would prefer planning to spend $87 billion to change the weather, rather than focus on the business of maintenance of roads and parks. It is so much more exciting to be part of grandiose projects, rather than just taking care of the day-to-day business, such as fixing the fence along Elbow Drive beside the Elbow River. I recall one city council member telling me four years ago that he was going to get that done, no matter what. Well, it is still not done and is another example of the City not focussing on taking care of what we already have.

Whether it is vandalism on the Peace Bridge, ridiculously rough roads or simply removing construction signs as soon as a project is completed, our city council and city administration need to pay more attention to the little frustrations that all Calgarians face every day. The big plans and the future strategies will always be important, of course, but there needs to be more time spent on the minutiae of daily life that can exhaust us all.

George H. Brookman is the chairman and company ambassador for WCD Ltd.

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Close the bridge to regular people becasue of one bad apple; sounds like a conservative "freedom" solution. Where are the protests?

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An example of common-sense and rational thought, something our civic 'leaders' have continually shown they are incapable of. Brilliant. Thank you Mr. Brookman

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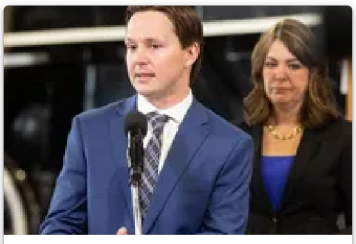

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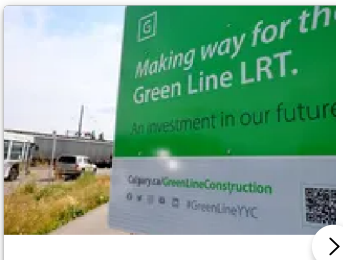

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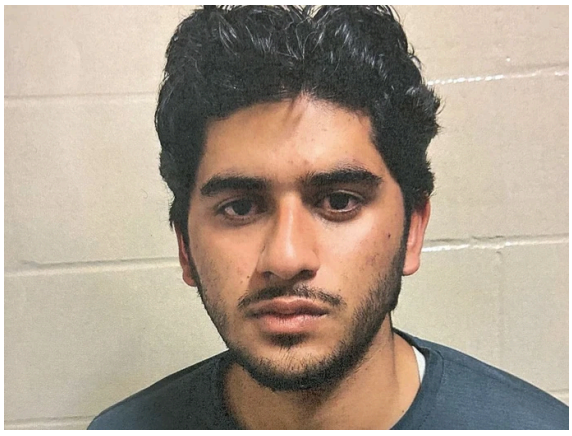

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